


Open Access Article

 <https://doi.org/10.55463/hkjss.issn.1021-3619.61.23>

Performative Role of a Pande in Chepang

Rishiram Adhkari

PhD in Chepang Literature and Identity, Teacher, Nepal Sanskrit University

Received: March 14, 2023 ▪ Reviewed: April 11, 2023

▪ Accepted: May 10, 2023 ▪ Published: June 30, 2023

Abstract:

Cultural, ritual, and religious practices of the Chepang are based on shamanism. The shaman of the chepang is known as *pande*. The main purpose of this study is to analyze how *pandes* perform therapeutic roles in their community, why these roles are important to maintain indigenous Chepang culture, and what are the threats faced by *pandes* in modern times. The study follows the qualitative method of research and analyzes the roles of *pandes* performed in society for which both primary and secondary data are used. Primary information for this study was collected from the *pandes* of Kalika Municipality Wards 10 and 11, and books, journals, and other published and unpublished materials about the topic were used as secondary sources of data for this study. Richard Schechner theory of ritual performance also uses as theoretical guideline of the study and compare *pandes'* acts as a ritualistic and cultural performance. The *pandes* perform various roles and responsibilities to fulfill cultural, ritual and religious demands of the Chepang and preserve their culture, ritual myth, history, oral literature and traditional belief that has been practiced in the Chepang community for a long time. Findings and conclusion of the study are based on the data analysis and description. The roles of *pandes* are omnipotent in the community. Their role is not only limited to cultural festivities and ritual ceremonies but also their roles as therapists, fortune tellers, and experts in flora and fauna. Thus, the performance of the *Pandes* is important to maintain the traditional identities of the Chepang living in Nepal.

Keywords: Chepang culture, shamanism, *pandes*, performances.

车旁潘德的表演角色

摘要:

车旁人的文化、仪式和宗教习俗均以萨满教为基础。车旁的萨满被称为“潘德”。本研究的主要目的是分析潘德斯如何在其社区中发挥治疗作用，为什么这些作用对于维持土著车旁文化很重要，以及潘德斯在现代面临哪些威胁。该研究遵循定性研究方法，并使用第一手和第二手数据分析潘德斯在社会中所扮演的角色。本研究的主要信息是从卡里卡市第 10 区和第 11 区的潘德收集的，书籍、期刊以及其他已出版和未出版的有关该主题的材料被用作本研究的辅助数据来源。理查德谢赫纳的仪式表演理论也作为研究的理论指

导，并将潘德斯的行为作为一种仪式和文化表演进行比较。潘德人履行着各种角色和职责，以满足车旁人的文化、仪式和宗教需求，并保存车旁社区长期实行的文化、仪式神话、历史、口述文学和传统信仰。研究结果和结论基于数据分析和描述。潘德的角色在社区中是无所不能的。他们的角色不仅限于文化庆典和仪式，还充当治疗师、算命师和动植物专家。因此，潘德人的表演对于维持生活在尼泊尔的切庞人的传统身份具有重要意义。

关键词：车旁文化、萨满教、潘德斯、表演。

1. Introduction

The study analyzes the performative role of *Pandes* in the Chepang community. The shaman of the Chepang is known as the *pande* who performance various roles to preserve the culture and rituals of the Chepang. The word *pande* derives from the Sanskrit word *pandit*, which refers to the person who knows everything related to myth, culture, religion, and belief system of the society. Chepangs are one of the highly marginalized ethnic groups living in Chitwan, Makawanpur, southern parts of Gorkha, and Dhading districts, all located in the south-western-central part of Nepal. The Central Bureau of Statistics recorded 68,399 Chepang populations (CBS, 2011). The physical structure of Chepang is consistent with that of other local ethnic groups. In this regard, Ganesh Man Gurunga (1995) states, "They have flat and short noses, round faces, dark and brown complexions, thin and medium ears, dark eyes, and prominent eye brows" (Gurunga, 1995). Historian and scholars Bista (1967) believes that Chepangs have moved from *Puknathali* of Dolakha district and have spread across central southern hilly region of Nepal (Bista, 1967). Chepang as a name of a race entered into the books and minds of Western researchers in the mid-nineteenth century. Hodgson (1857), a British diplomat to Nepal, mentioned Chepangs in the journal *Asiatic Society of Bengal* and discussed their language for the first time, "Interesting tongues of a genuinely aboriginal characters, which are spoken in the East of the Kali by certain forest tribes existing in scanty numbers nearly in a state of nature such as the *Chepang* and *Kusanda*" (Hodgson, 1857). In recent decades, especially after the last quarter of this century, several books and research articles have been published on Chepangs. In 1971, Ross Caughley compiled the first dictionary of the Chepang language (Caughley et al., 1971). Dor Bahadur Bista (1967), Navin Kumar Rai (1977), Ganesamana Gurunga (1995), Dina Riboli (1996), and Rishiram Adhikari (2006) have researched Chepang. Among them, only Riboli (1995) researched shamanistic performances and the value of *pandes* in the community, however, she has not mentioned the role of *pandes* in detail, so the study analyzes the various roles of *pandes* in their community.

There are several hypotheses about the origin of the Chepangs. They are based on legends, conjectures and sayings. One of the senior researchers, Ross Caughley (1971) writes that the word 'Chepang' has originated from the original word *Che-Wang*. He further writes, "In the Chepang language 'Che' means dog and 'Bang'

means stone or bow with arrow. So those who live in the cave or stone with a dog or arrow are known as the Chepangs. Ultimately, this appears as the words *Cheapng*" (Caughley et al., 1971). Some anthropologists also regard the Lohari and Kushari myths as origin sources of the Chepang. There are greater versions of the *Lohari* and *Kushahari* myths. One of them noted by Adhikari (2006). It tells the Chepangs are the offspring of Sita's son *Lahari* or *Lava*, who is famous in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. During Sita's exile, she had to stay in the cottage of a hermit named *Balmilki* near the Narayani River. Sita gave birth to a son named *Lohari*. One day she saw some monkeys playing with their babies. The scene was very moving. She too took her baby to the river to show him the monkeys playing and entertaining. But she forgot to inform Balmiki about it. The *rishi* became restless as he did not find the baby in the cradle. He thought that *Sita* would be angry. Therefore, he created a new baby out of the 'Kuss Grass', and the baby exactly looked like Lava. But as *Sita* was back she got surprised to see another baby in the cradle. *Rishi* explained the events. Chepangs widely believe that they are Lohari's descendants, the first son of *Sita* (Adhikari, 2006).

Scholars like Caughley et al. (1971), Bista (1967) mentioned the Lohari and *Kushari* myths as the origins of the Chepangs. However, Adhikari (2006) has given an alternative hypothesis about the *Lohari* myth concerning the origin of Chepangs. He suggests that it is the process of unnecessary Hindunization of Chepangs.

The above reviews and criticisms noted that the Chepang is an important indigenous community of Nepal having separate culture and rituals; however, none of the studies focused on the performative roles of the *pandes* so that the main objective of the study was to analyze their role in their community. The study is limited to the primary source of data and analyzes the performative roles of *pandes* in community. The study is significant to show the important *pandes* in their community. If *pandes* lose their performative roles, the traditional Chepang culture will die. Performative roles of the *pandes* are necessary to maintain and preserve the knowledge system as well as the identities of the Chepang.

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research paradigm to explore the performative roles of *pandes* on the basis of personal observations and the perception of the participants. Creswell (2007) highlights, "Qualitative

research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 125). Qualitative research focuses on non-numerical data such as opinion perceptions, personal experiences that leads researchers to the depth of the problem. The study is also based on non-numerical data and focuses on understanding the participants about the value of *Pande's* performance in the Chepang society. Qualitative research focuses on various patterns of analysis, such as descriptive, interpretive, explorative, and narrative. The study follows the interpretive pattern with a descriptive mode. Due to the nature of the study, it also uses ethnographic tools such as in-depth interviews, semi-participatory observations, and cases to determine the value of *Pande's* performance in the Chepang community. The scenario of the study is similar to the definition of ethnographic research defined by Creswell (2007) as, "Ethnography is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational and interview data" (Creswell, 2007). I have collected data in a natural setting and also take a long time to collect the data from the field on the basis of the principle of ethnographic research. I have also shared the idea of local *pandes* of Kalika municipality wards 10 and 11 of Chitwan. For writing this paper, both primary and secondary sources of data have been used and collected using different tools and techniques.

The primary data were collected from the field visit. I visited Chepang villages in 2022 February to March. The issue of *pande* is very crucial and sensitive. So before asking the questions, I have taken consent from the *pandes* to talk about their position in society and their overall situation. I have given pseudo names of the participating *pandes* and tried to maintain secrecy of the subject matter. Due to the limitation of time and resources, I have not been able to include all the existing *pandes* of the area. I followed a purposive

random sampling method and selected two males and two female *pandes*. I have selected the participants on the basis of their age and experience. Both (new) young and old (experienced) *pandes* participated in this study. To collect information from the sampled *pandes*, I used subjective interview questions and check lists. Subjective questions were related to the roles of *pandes* in the Chepang community, current situation and threat. In the same way, I also observed the situation of *pandes'* performances basically (curative) and collected necessary information such as their dressing pattern, materials, and worshipping style.

Secondary data were gathered from desk work. Books, journals, articles, and published and unpublished materials related to my study area were used as the secondary sources.

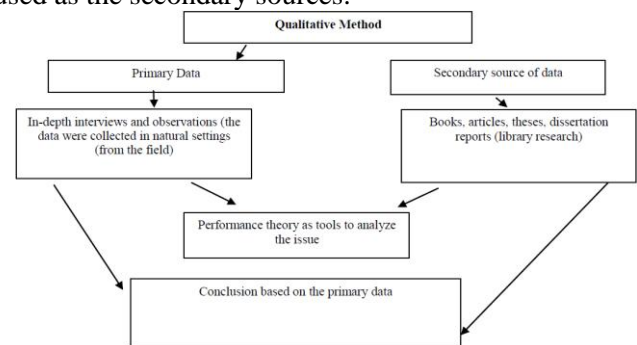


Figure 1. Flowchart of the research methods

2.1. Study Area

The study area is located in Chitwan district, around one hundred forty kilometers from Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. Kalika Municipality's Report (2022) notes, "It lies in the north eastern part of the Chitwan district, which is one of the traditional home lands of the Chepang. The study area extends between 83° 54' 45" and 84° 48' 10" east longitudes and 27° 21' 45" to 27° 52' 30" north latitude" (Kalika Municipality, 2022).

Table 1. Population and household of Chepangs in the study area (Kalika Municipality, 2022)

Ward No.	Total HH	Chepang population	Percentage Population	Remarks
10	391	1104	90	The majority of population is Chepang
11	303	1024	88	Chepangs dominant area

The study area is ancestral land of the Chepang. They have been living in this land since ancestral times. In Ward No. 10 of Kalika municipality, the Chepang population will decrease due to migration of other people. However, Ward No. 11 is the Chepang

dominant area of Chitwan. There are numbers of *pandes* in both wards, but only eight persons claimed themselves as the *pande* during the time of my research. Among them, only four (two males and two females) participated in this study.

Table 2. Information about selected *pandes* (Field visit in 2022)

Ward no.	Total existing <i>pandes</i> in study area	Sample <i>pandes</i>		Total	Sample <i>pandes</i>		Total
		Male	Female		Male	Female	
10	5	4	1	5	1	1	2
11	3	2	1	3	1	1	2
Total	8	6	2	8	2	2	4

Due to the male dominated structure of society, only few females are involved in shamanistic performance.

However, they are also popular in villages. Female *pandes* are famous for treating mental illness and child-

related diseases. Their role is confined to therapeutic activities and they hardly participate in cultural and ritual performances.



Figure 2. Map of Chitwan, the survey area (District Coordination Committee Office, 2022)

2.2. The Introduction of Performance Theory

Performance theory, basically the theory of Richard Bauman (2000), Richard Schechner (2000), Dina Riboli (1996), Victor Turner (1988), M. Hoppal (1984), and E. Bell (2008), was used for this study. The performance of the Pande is related to the ritual and cultural activities, which is similar to the explanation of Richard Schechner (1988b) of ritualistic theoretical performances: "Ritual is one of the several activities related to theater. The others are play, games, sports, dance, and music... These activities are primeval; there is no reason to hunt for "origins" or "derivations." There are only variations in form, the intermixing among genres, and these show no long-term evolution from "primitive" to "sophisticated" or "modern." Sometimes ritual, sports and the aesthetic genres [...] are merged so that it is impossible to call the activity by any one limiting name" (Schechner, 1988b).

Above lines noted that cultural and ritual performances are almost similar to the popular modern pup cultural dances and songs that create an interest in the audience to observe the performance of cultural heroes. Like Schechner's idea a *pande* also plays the role of hero; his/her performance brings both aesthetic and ritual value to the performance. Richard Bauman (2000) also focuses on same issue of folk performance and verbal use of language with body performance. In a *pande's* performance chanting and dancing appear once at a time, which is a mixed form of folk opera. Bauman notes, "Nevertheless, from the vantage point of performance as a mode of communicative practice, each performer must give shape to the utterance anew and mark it as performance in the real-time unfolding of actual events" (Bauman, 2000). The performance of a *pande* is similar to the unfolding act of Bauman, which is similar to the Turnerian cultural theater that has a fixed ritual value of performance. The theoretical guideline helps to analyze the issue on the basis of objectives and easy to draw conclusions from the study. In the shamanic performance, they use neither doctrine nor dogma. Shamanistic knowledge is mainly passed on

orally with very few exceptions. Shamans need not worship sacred images in the temple, church, or other religious places. Shamanism has no priesthood and is not recognized by a solid hierarchical structural power among religious experts. The shamans worldwide use the drum, which is almost similar. It originated from Siberia and spread all over the world.

Richard Schechner compares shamanic performance with theater activities. In this regard, Schechner (2000) writes: "The jump from ritual to theater is assumed or attributed to ancient events. Organist theory and evolutionary methodology have, however, a built in criterion for their own evolution: their ability to identify the links transitional forms" (Schechner, 2000). Like Schechner, the *pandes* also hold private séances when they are completely alone. The trance is an essential part of these nocturnal séances, and it appears to be disordered and uncontrollable when the spirit is calling a novice, although the shamans tend to gradually gain control over it.

2.3. Pandes in the Chepang

In the Chepang community, a shaman is known as *pande*. The term *pande* has been derived from the Hindu *pandit* or from the word '*panda*' which is defined in the dictionary as a religious official who has inherited the function and presides over a temple. One of the most important things about *pandes* is that they can make a journey through the liminal states of trance. The *pandes* often go into a long silence trance. They use the trance and establish relationships with gods and Gurus. They live in two worlds and two timelines simultaneously. They reach the sky, the underworld, and the earth (According to the Chepang myth, there are three layers of the underworld where gods and ancestors live). This function as a liminal phase between two different states, one connected to the divinities and another to the human. All initiations occur in the dream of *pandes* into the presence of spiritual gurus. Dreams of *pandes* are supposed to play some important roles in their professions. There are two phases of a dream: one is very short, which enables them to prepare for accepting the shamanic knowledge, and the other is a long complete dream, which enables the *pandes* to acquire more maturity. *Pandes* are heroes, warriors, therapists, and travelers to other worlds. They hold some secrets that a common human being cannot.

2.4. Various Roles of Pandes Performed in Their Community

Pandes play various roles in their community through their performances. This study analyzes the roles of *pandes* in their community on the basis of participants' perceptions and author's own observations. I have selected four *pandes* from the study area and given pseudo names to participating *pandes* such as *pande 1 (p1)* *pande 2 (p2)* *pande 3 (p3)* and *pande 4 (p4)*. The table 3 highlights the general characteristics of the participants.

Table 3. General characteristics of the participants (Field survey in 2022)

S.N.	Participants	Aged	Sex	Occupations	Experiences	Education	Address (Shakrikhor)
1	Pande1(P1)	87	Male	Shaman	60 years	Literate	Ward no. 8
2	Pande2(p2)	69	Female	Farmer	45 years	Illiterate	Ward no. 2
3	Pande3(p3)	50	Female	Farmers	35 years	Illiterate	Ward no. 8
4	Pande4(p4)	36	Male	Farmer	12 years	Iterate	Ward no. 2

Table 3 indicates the general characteristics of the participants. Among the four *pandes*, p1 is old and experienced, having sixty years of experience. He is male and has been living in Kalika municipality Ward No. 10. He is only literate and can read and write Nepali. In the same way, P2 is sixty nine years old female who has forty five years of working experience in the community and has been living in Kalika municipality Ward No 11. Likewise, p3 is fifty years old female who is illiterate and has been living in Kalika municipality Ward No. 10. Lastly, p4 is a thirty six year old male and he has been living in Kalika municipality Ward No 11. He is young and has 12-year experience of working as a *pande*.

2.4.1. Roles of Pandes Related to Cultural and Ritual Performances

On different *pujas* such as *Chhonam*, *Namrung*, *Tonkolongs*, and *Bhayar Puja*, *pandes* appear as if someone is sent by some divine force to help people accomplish their wishes. *Pandes* are at the centre of the rituals of Chepangs. They reveal some features of the ritual performances Turner (1998) observes: It is the ability to “get into” and “get back from” “that makes the shaman a continually useful person, not a person to be used once only. Thus, there are three categories of performance, 1) aesthetic where the audience changes consciousness while the performer rolls over, 2) ritual drama where the subject of the ceremony is transformed while the officiating performer rolls over; 3) social drama where all involved change (Turner, 1998).

Based on Turnerian categorization, one can say that the performance of the *pandes* falls into the second category, i.e., ritualistic performance that is based on particular situations or ceremonies. As part of fulfilling such roles, they perform various activities that are similar to dramatic performances. Most of the times, *pandes* appear like a hero among his audience as he prepares to “get into and back from” ‘other’ worlds. Audiences passively wait for the journey of the *pandes*.

Various performative roles enable *pande* to carve out distinct identity and appearance, which ordinary Chepangs regard essential. *Pandes* are widely believed to possess supernatural powers to fight against demons. They are also believed to possess some divine power to talk to divinities and ancestors. On various *pujas*, *pandes* are supposed to have mastered all ritualistic texts or verses that are horrified and important. Therefore, they are priests among their fellow beings. Since *pandes* also hold skills and crafts of playing drums, singing slogans, and dancing, they have been taken as divine artists. Therefore, people regard them with a great owe and respect.

2.5. Gaidu Puja

This festival is celebrated in *Jestha's* month (Full moon in June). *Gaidu* is the god who saves animals and livestock from different kinds of disasters such as floods, landslides, or influenza. On occasion, *pandes* chant the mantra, which is very significant in itself. It is believed that shamans have the power to convince the *Gaidu* or god and make him ready to save their crops and animals. They offer cock and foal to the god and make him happy.

2.6. Nwagi (Chhonam)

Nwagi is known as the *Chhonam* festival. It is the most important festival of the Chepangs. It falls in the month of Nepali month Bhadra (mid September), particularly on its second Tuesday. During the festival, Chepangs collect different kinds of agricultural products such as *ghaiya* (Upland-rice), *pindalu* (taro root), *girmala* (Sponge guard), and lemon and offer them to their ancestors. The festival is celebrated with certain rituals. On this occasion, *pandes* shave their heads and take a ritual bath and perform a special night worship to invite their ancestors for the feast of the New Year. In my recent field visit, I understood that all the Chepangs are not celebrate this festival.

2.7. Aaitabare Puja

It is another important festival of the Chepang. *Aitabare* is supposed to be a benevolent god. They believe that *Mangshir Purnima* night (full moon night of the December) is the birth day of their ancestor. On the occasion of the festival, *pande* and *maha pande* (*Phal*) both chant some special mantras to remember the god. They believe that only the god *Aaitabare* can help one to remain safe from epidemics. According to the myth, the sun god appears on the earth and the life begins again. Therefore, they worship *Aaitabre* as a symbol of energy.

2.8. Birth Ceremony

The pregnant girl moves back to her parents' house a few days before a child is born. Therefore, she takes much support and help from her mother. After the child is born, she is considered impure for a short time, mainly for five to seven days. During this period, the mother and baby are kept separate and secreted from other family members. The *pande* on the part of the wife family performs purification ceremonies. The husband can meet his wife and the newly born child only after purification.

2.9. Chhewar

Chhawar is one of the important ceremonies of Chepangs. It is celebrated after the male child crosses

the age of six. According to *pandes'* suggestions the parents of the male child go to the child's maternal uncle and invite him to the ceremony. They invited *pandes* to come for the ceremony. Maternal uncles offer gifts and shave the child's head. After Chhewar, the male child is recognized as a member of the community and is treated as an adult who is allowed to work in the field.

2.10. Marriage Rites

Marriage is an important event in life for all. Both Chepang men and women are mature and responsible only after they get married. Marriages conducted according to traditional culture demand certain rituals, and *pandes* play an important role in such occasions. On the day before the wedding, the groom goes to the bride's house with a gift of a pot full of liquors and asks the girl's parents about their expectations. If the girl's parents agree, the marriage is fixed. Otherwise it can be canceled. In some cases, girl's parents demand more liquor from boy's parents before accepting the proposal. Then the wedding day is fixed. There is no need for chanting mantras as dance in a marriage of Brahmin communities. Though *pande* is called from the bride side, liquors and food are offered to him from bridegroom's side.

2.11. Death Rites

Evil spirits are considered as the main cause of death in the Chepang community. When someone dies, all family members and relatives mourn and arrange for the funeral. The corpse is wrapped by a *kaatro* (a piece of cloth used to cover dead body) and is taken to the *Jababi*, a net bag made of *choya* or bamboo thread including a pot of tobacco and food. Such items are taken as necessary stuff for his/her way to the underworld. They usually dig the grave under Shorearobusta trees.

2.12. Rites of Constructing Houses

The composition of Chepang house is unique. In the survey area, the author came across only a few joint families. Such families do have up to twenty members. Generally, one comes across unitary families, and many joint households has up to ten members. The Chepang houses are immediately recognizable as they are temporarily structured and made of mudstone, dry grass and bamboo. Such houses are much warmer than others.

2.13. Therapeutic Role of Pandes

Curing the disease is one of the important aspects of pandemic that is known as a therapeutic role. *Pandes* plays the role of a therapist within the Chepang community. Chepangs widely believe in shamanism and take it as medicine, culture, and tradition. The *pandes* are expected to fulfill the roles of a psychotherapist within the community. They are the persons who are supposed to show concerns over problems that occur in the community. *Pandes* use their knowledge for the welfare of the Chepangs. In this

regard, Roboli (1996) states: "The Chepang themselves called *Tunsuriban*, a word that describes their ability to move freely into both celestial autonomous kingdoms. The *Jhankri* of their ethnic groups, in particular the *Tamangs*, are called *Urghsuriban* as they are only able to continue with the celestial world most certainly be overcomes if they venture to the underworld" (Roboli, 1996).

Pandes are usually taken as diviners, therapists, and phychopomps, who can accompany the dead soul to the world of their ancestors. They are also the custodian of the local myths and the culture of the community. *Pandes* are supposed to possess abilities to cure patients of every type. They move quite freely between 'this' world and 'that' world, and marches through cosmic worlds in a manner similar to the ways protagonists in different epics do. The treatment of mental illness is more performative than physical illness. In this regard, I asked one of the participants *pande2* (P2) a question about the experience of the treatment of mental illness. She narrates her experience in the following manner: "Five years ago one of my relative's daughters became mad and I was called for treatment. At first, I observed her condition and found that the black shaman worsened her mental condition as well as physical condition. The black shaman seriously hunted her. She was only sixteen years old. She was chained by a rope. Her condition was pitiful. At first, I suggested her family members to prepare the *puja* materials. I chose Tuesday to cure her because the day was her birthday. Before beginning the *puja*, after a few minutes, the girl asked for water and started to speak like an ordinary girl. After that, I suggested the girl's family not torture her and keep her in charm" (Personal Interview with P2).

It is widely believed that physical illness is also the cause of some malefic beings. For the treatment of this type of illness *pandes* use both shamanic and worldly knowledge once at a time. In my survey area, I have seen different therapeutic practices. People usually meet *pandes* before they go to the hospital. *Pandes* use different herbs found around the area. *Pandes* hold knowledge about local geography and its flora and fauna, plants, etc. They collect local herbals and make medicine for use to cure physical illnesses. In this regard, *pande1* (P1) explains: "I know of herbal medicine so I first use some of the herbal medicine to treat the patient of facture. Last time, I used plant bark and treated the patient. There are various leaves of plants that can be used for treatment. After using such herbals, I pray the god and guru to provide energy to the patient to fight against the disease and bad fortune" (P1 personal interview).

Male *pandes* have knowledge about herbal medicine, and they use some herbs to treat the patient. They obtain knowledge of herb medicine from their ancestors and their own experiences.

Most of the time, *pandes'* treatment is similar to a theatrical performance. The treatment is divided into three phases and uses four techniques to treat the

patient. In this regard T. Schmid notes: "There are four types of divination that are used by the shamans to determine the cause of illness and disaster. Those occur in the trance and dreams that using various techniques and instruments" (Schmid, 1967). During the time of treatment, the *Pandes* hold the drum in a horizontal position and throw some rice into the membrane and observe the shadows cast by fire and the movement of rice. At first, *pandes* distinguish different types of shadows and determine which spirit or spirits are causing the problems. The movements of rice indicate good or bad signs. If the grains of rice do not move, the patient may die. In this regard, *pande4* (p4) highlights, "Last time I went to neighboring village to treat a patient, one time-same thing happened. The grains of rice do not move. I felt difficult and returned back home. The next day the patient dies" (personal interview with P4).

Sometimes diagnosis can be made by taking the patient's pluses. This type of pulse checking technique is also found in other ethnic groups such as Lama, *Bijuwa*, or *Gubhaju*. Chepang *pandes* usually press the middle finger onto the vein of the patient's pulse. By checking the pulse beat, they find the overall condition of the patient. The *pandes* receive a shock inside the patient's body. Sometimes they find the name of the malefic beings that could have caused the illness. The pulse movement of the body helps to determine the mental condition of the patient and shock of the body. If they find the name of a person responsible for illness, the patient's pulse may miss the beat. This is the only technique to be performed by a shaman. *Pande 1* (P1) highlights the situation as, "I always check the pulse of the patient and find out his/her situation. If the pulse rate is abnormal, the patient may attack by the dangerous devil. For it long performance is necessary" (Personal Interview with P1).

Divination through dream is also used as a method to cure the illness. Divination requests that there is a type of social and collative consensus, which in turn adds to the *pandes'* prestige. Such performance is called *Chinta*. By using *Chinta*, *pandes* can identify epidemics or deaths and future problems that people like to face. These kinds of diagnostic séances occur without using a drum. The second phase is *puja* performance. It starts after the sun sets. First, *pandes* check the patient's pulse and identify the degree of sickness. It is at this moment, they determine whether they should go for nocturnal séance or not. During the trance, *pandes* can visit the cosmic world to determine the cause of suffering. They may ask the divinity and assistant spirit to show them the image of the malefic spirit. It is believed that the patient is impure because there is an evil thing in the body of the patient. In some cases, illness is taken as the cause of sin. At that phase, *pandes* use their skills and knowledge of performance and request demons not to create further problems. At the end of the therapeutic action, *pandes* sacrifice a cock or a goat, which symbolizes the extraction of illness from the body of the patient. Most of the time, *pandes* perform

therapeutic action at night because all the malefic beings are activated at night and it is easy to fight with the demons. It is believed that night is for demons and divinities while day is for human beings. At night, all the supernatural creatures appear on the earth if the human being becomes sick. *Pandes* cure the patient at night by taking the help of divinities. On *puja*, they take the help of an instrument and request the guru and divinities by chanting the long invocation. The stage looks like a theater as the patient lies near the *pande*. *Pandes* sit in front of the altar and chant the mantra and request help. The process continues for half an hour. P2 describes the overall situation of *puja* performances: "Mostly, therapeutic *pujas* are completed within three days. *Puja* starts with usual chanting and invocations, which is a kind of request for help to cure the sickness. *Puja* is held in the house of the patient usually outside the *Varanda* or the confined space. *Pandes* call different divinities using the sound of the drum. The mapping is the symbol of the universe, which helps him find the god and their special location" (Personal interview with P2).

Pandes make the altar very consciously. Three eggs are placed in a line. The first of these is located a few centimeters away from the second that is opposite to the seat that *pandes* occupy. The second egg is bigger in size as it is a duck egg and is placed in the centre, and the third one is placed opposite to the *pande* seat. Then *pande* starts his journey to the cosmos. This journey is often taken as a very dangerous one because he often meets angry divinities or malefic spirits that might attack him. There is no space or temporal boundary of *Puja*. The whole universe is confined to few square centimeters while an egg can function as a proctor of the *pande*.

The second type of design is called cosmic design. In this design, three pieces of metal in white, red, and black are placed in the ground. Lines are traced the black one with the same colored powder. These illustrate a vaguely anthropomorphic figure. In this regard, P4 highlights the *puja*: "This type of design has two functions, the first is to call up supernatural beings and the second is to show the way for divinities. Then, the trances end with greeting and thanking or offering to those divinities that have intervened at some point. At the end of the *puja*, the *pandes* usually explain what has happened to the patient and offer advice for the welfare of the patient" (Personal interview with P4).

Various kinds of magic weapons have been used by the *pandes* to fight the demon and create a belief in the patient. The efficiency of *pandes* depends on the public relationship. Mainly, there are two significance functions of *pandes*. One is symbolic, which helps him maintain power balance in nature and is a therapeutic function. To fulfill these functions, *pandes* perform various roles.

Pandes' performances play important roles in the Chepang community because without absence, it is impossible to lead their traditional lifestyle. In this regard, *pande1* (P1) speaks: "When I was young, there

were many *pandes* in Chepang village. Among the *pandes*, one was known as the main pande (*Maha pande* or *phal*) but now there is no *phal*. The situation of the *pandes* is different. People hardly respect us. Only in time of sickness people remember me. My role is limited to the treatment of the sick; however, in the past, I have been the main person of the village. People asked me all the time about a new function” (Personal Interview with P1).

It shows that the roles of *pandes* confine to therapeutic performances and other functions are minimized. In this context, P4 states: “People introduce me as witch doctor and devalue my knowledge. After me, no young person follows the job of *pandes*. School education introduced *pandes* as an unnecessary element of society. The Church also blames the *pandes* as an evil force. Now I am confused of my role, however, my relatives and older people respect” (Personal Interview with P4). The present non-government organization and government programs totally deny the importance of *pandes*. The programs encourage people to take hospital service instead of shaman. *Pande3* (P3) highlights the situation: “When I was young, I automatically gained this knowledge. At that time I had treated many sick people in a single day, but now only a few people meet me in a week. Rich people first go to the hospital and later they meet me if the hospital cannot be well. Only poor people met me for treatment for the first time. After some years, *pandes* and their profession may disappear from the village” (Personal Interview with P3).

These days' people doubt the therapeutic role of *pandes* and give priority to hospital treatment. In my survey area, there are many churches that are responsible for creating such awareness. As a result, *pandes*' roles are in crisis. There are mainly two kinds of interventions in the professional world of *pandes*. One comes from western culture and medicine, and another from the church. These two forces eliminate the existence and position of the *pandes*. Only a few powerful *pandes* remain in my survey area because most of the Chepangs have changed their religion. The therapeutic performances of *pandes* are going through some real and powerful challenges as hospitals offer free treatment for the Chepangs.

3. Matter of Preserving the *Pandes*

Since modernization influences of global culture and expansion of technology, *pandes* have fallen into crisis. Chepangs are ready to assimilate into global culture. In the same way, Chepangs themselves are not fully capable of continuing traditional cultural performances and ritual practices because of changing ecology, environment, and economic status. In the Chepang community, these factors create problems for preserving shamanic practices. *Pandes* lose their self respect due to the negligence of the government and non-government sectors and encroachments by Christianity. So, the young generation does not want to be a *pande* in future.

Due to globalization, Chepangs are emerging from traditional cultural boundaries and adopting a cosmopolitan culture that highly influences visual culture, mass media, and school education. Being modern and advanced, the young generation follows new cultural practices different from the old one. In the same way, awareness programs and school education present *pande* as the evil practice of community and encourage people to free themselves from traditional behavior. They try to persuade Chepangs to take help from government administrative units and hospital services rather than the local shaman. More than that, the ongoing demand of life forces them to keep in contact with the church for fulfilling losing their cultural and religious faith. After the encroachment of shamanic practice, pastors replace the role of *pandes*.

Conversion is one of the main threats against preserving *Pandes* because after adopting Christianity. Chepangs' cultural performances, lifecycle, and rituals automatically change. After being converted, Chepangs humiliate the expertise of *pande*, so they lose self respect and leave the profession. Such a situation poses problems for sustaining the shamanic cultural practices of the Chepang community. Government agencies have no program or plan to share the knowledge of *pandes*, although money is spent on cultural preservation. In the name of awareness and development programs, government and non-government organizations not only encroach on the position of *pandes* but also eliminate shamanic cultural practice from the Chepang community. In this regard, *Pande 1* (P1) says, "For a few years, they are confused on their cultural rituals as well as religious practices and performances because Christian missionaries manipulate them to adopt new ones. After adopting new ones, shamanic-based cultural practices and performances are replaced by the new" (Personal Interview with P1). This shows that the existence of indigenous Chepang culture will vanish with the replacement of the *pandes*.

4. Conclusion

This research brings me to the realization that *pandes* need to be contextualized at the boarder social and political levels. *Pandes* no doubt hold a great power and importance within the Chepang community. *Pandes*' importance cannot be minimized because overall identities of the Chepang are based on the performance of *pandes*. Chepangs know that without their *pandes* their identities will be lost. This belief makes them humbler to preserve *pandes*.

In recent years, Chepang communities are going through another major mode of cultural intervention as most of the Chepangs are found adopting Christianity. During my field visit, I have seen a new church near the Chepang settlement. In the church, some of the former *pandes* were mainly involved. This shows that Chepangs will adopt a new tradition insisted on shamanic culture. One comes across several churches of nondescript size and location being established in the Chepang communities. Local Chepangs are seen

gathering in the church every Saturday. This cultural intervention has heralded greater challenges for *pandes*. Therefore, I think that *pandes* now need to be studied not only in terms of the cultural roles that they have always been performing but also in terms of the improvisatory roles that they have to carve out at this juncture of history of their communities. But the fact is that Chepang communities have always and already remained heterogeneous and *pandes* have successfully carved out their niche and played an important role in bringing or establishing cultural relationships between and among different communities. *Pandes* are always in demand and respected among locals. Since Chepangs have different ritual performances to be performed, *pandes* are not going to vanish into thin air. It may sound optimistic and anti-Christian but I think Churches cannot replace *pandes* because they are more rooted in the psyche and culture of the people. Therefore, *pandes'* roles, I think, will not decrease in the days to come. *Pandes* by their power can cross geographical boundaries such as the earth and the sky and can travel into the underworld. Therefore, they can survive the cultural intervention that their communities are going through.

Pandes at present are no longer the same as they are aware of the changes that have taken place at the national and international level. Politically not only *pandes* but also other members of the Chepang communities are very much aware of their rights and identities. This makes one realize the fact that Chepangs are not going to surrender to the waves of changes that reach their hamlets and doors.

The study brings the opinions of the respondents about the role of *pandes* in the Chepang community. The existing literature could not highlight the issue of the performative role, which reflects indigenous knowledge, skills and wisdom of the Chepang, so the study is original in academic research. The conclusion of the study is innovative and new as well as valuable because without the performance of the *pandes'* identities of the Chepang, they cannot exist in this world. Field interviews and natural opinions of the participants indicate that the situation is going to worsen due to various internal and external forces. To preserve the civilization of the Chepang, everyone should be conscious about the existence of the performative roles of the *Pandes* that are going to decline from the Earth.

4.1. Limitations and Further Study

The study only limited the performative roles of the *Pandes* living in Nepal, particularly in the Chitwan district of Bagmati province. Only four *pandes* were involved in this study, and the conclusions confined to the idea of their views related to the importance of their performance in preserving the traditional identities of the Chepang.

Acknowledgments

The author acknowledges the *pandes* who

participated in this study and the writers whose ideas and information are included in this study as secondary sources. Similarly, the author acknowledges Prof. Luo Jinyi, editor of The Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences who encouraged me to publish a paper in the journal.

Supplementary Materials (Interview Questionnaires)

Socio economic background of the participants:

1. Name:
2. Address:
3. Age:
4. Education:
5. Occupations:
6. Experiences:

Questions related to the roles of pandes:

1. How do you become *pandes*?
2. What are the main roles of *pandes* and how they perform their roles in community?
3. What types of knowledge do you use to cure people from various diseases?
4. How you perform therapeutic roles in your community?
5. What are the roles of *pandes'* in cultural and ritual performances?
6. What is the current situation of *pandes* in the society?
7. What are the opportunities and thread facing by *pandes* in present time?
8. Have you any idea about the roles of *pandes*?

Observation check list:

1. Physical situation of the *pandes* when preparing their therapeutic performance.
2. Paraphernalia of the *pandes*.
3. Patient psychological situation.
4. Body performance and chanting of the *pandes*.
5. Materials used *pandes* for therapeutic performances.

References

- [1] ADHIKARI, R. (2006). *A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Chepang Language of Chitwan District* [Master thesis, Tribhuvan University].
- [2] BAUMAN, R. (2000). Disciplinary Reflexivity and Power Verbal Arts as Performance: A Response. *Journal of American Folklore*, 23(1), pp. 27-56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/542080>
- [3] BELL, E. (2008). *Theory of Performance*. Sage Publications.
- [4] BISTA, D.B. (1967). *People of Nepal*. Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- [5] CAUGHLEY, R.C., DAHAL, B.M., & BANDHU, C. (1971). A note on Chepang culture. *Journal of Tribhuvan University*, 6, pp. 77-89. Retrieved from <https://www.sil.org/resources/archives/36881>
- [6] CBS (2011). *National Population and Housing*

- Census 2011*. Government of Nepal. Retrieved from <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/wphc/nepal/nepal-census-2011-vol1.pdf>
- [7] CRESWELL, J.W. (2007). *Research Design, Qualitative Quantitative and Mixed Method Approach*. Sage.
- [8] DISTRICT COORDINATION COMMITTEE OFFICE (2022). *District Coordination Committee Office*. Retrieved from <https://dccchitwan.gov.np/en/>
- [9] GREVE, R.A. (1992). *Shaman's Concept of Illness and Healing Ritual in Mustang District of Nepal*. Nepalese Research Centre.
- [10] GURUNGA, G. (1995). *A Report from the Chepang Village: Society, Culture and Environment*. S. Gurung.
- [11] HODGSON, B.H. (1857). Chepang and Kusunda Tribe of Nepal. *Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society Calcutta*, 67, pp. 1230-1270.
- [12] HOPPAL, M. (1984). *Shamanism and Performance Arts*. Institute of Hungarian Academy.
- [13] KALIKA MUNICIPALITY (2022). Office of Municipal Executive, Redcrossgram, Chitwan, Bagmati Province, Nepal. Retrieved from <https://kalikamunchitwan.gov.np/en>
- [14] OPPITZ, M. (1981). *Shamans of the Blind Country*. Westdeutscher Rundfunk.
- [15] RAI, N.K. (1977). *People of Stone*. Centre for Nepal Asia Study.
- [16] RIBOLI, D. (1996). *Shamanic Paraphernalia and Dances among the Chepang Shaman*. Ethnographic Institute Hungary.
- [17] SCHECHNER, R. (2000). *Performance Studies an Introduction*. Routledge.
- [18] SCHMID, T. (1967). *Shamanistic Practice in Northern Nepal*. Almqvist & Wiksell.
- [19] TURNER, V. (1988). *The Anthropology of Performance*. Pal Publication.
- [20] UGO, M. (1984). *Shamanism and its Mode*. Ethnographic Institute.
- [7] CRESWELL, J.W. (2007). 研究设计、定性定量和混合方法。智者。
- [8] 区协调委员会办公室 (2022). 区协调委员会办公室。从...获得 <https://dccchitwan.gov.np/en/>
- [9] GREVE, R.A. (1992). 尼泊尔木斯塘地区萨满的疾病概念和治疗仪式。尼泊尔研究中心。
- [10] GURUNGA, G. (1995). 车旁村报告：社会、文化与环境。S·古隆。
- [11] HODGSON, B.H. (1857). 尼泊尔的车旁和库孙达部落。孟加拉亚洲协会杂志加尔各答，67，第 1230-1270 页。
- [12] HOPPAL, M. (1984). 萨满教和表演艺术。匈牙利科学院研究所。
- [13] 卡利卡市 (2022). 尼泊尔巴格马蒂省奇旺红十字区市政行政办公室。从...获得 <https://kalikamunchitwan.gov.np/en>
- [14] OPPITZ, M. (1981). 盲人国萨满。西德意志广播电台。
- [15] RAI, N.K. (1977). 石头人。尼泊尔亚洲研究中心。
- [16] RIBOLI, D. (1996). 车旁萨满的萨满用具和舞蹈。匈牙利民族志研究所。
- [17] SCHECHNER, R. (2000). 性能研究简介。劳特利奇。
- [18] SCHMID, T. (1967). 尼泊尔北部的萨满教实践。阿尔姆奎斯特和维克塞尔。
- [19] TURNER, V. (1988). 表演人类学。朋友出版。
- [20] UGO, M. (1984). 萨满教及其模式。民族志研究所。

参考文献：

- [1] ADHIKARI, R. (2006). 奇特旺地区车旁语言的社会语言学调查 [硕士论文，特里布万大学].
- [2] BAUMAN, R. (2000). 作为表演的纪律反思性和力量言语艺术：回应。美国民俗杂志，23(1)，第 27-56 页。 <https://doi.org/10.2307/542080>
- [3] BELL, E. (2008). 绩效理论。贤者出版社。
- [4] BISTA, D.B. (1967). 尼泊尔人。拉特纳·普斯塔克·班达尔。
- [5] CAUGHLEY, R.C., DAHAL, B.M., 和 BANDHU, C. (1971). 车旁文化笔记。《特里布万大学学报》，6，第 77-89 页。从...获得 <https://www.sil.org/resources/archives/36881>
- [6] 哥伦比亚广播公司 (2011). 2011 年全国人口和住房普查。尼泊尔政府。从...获得 <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/wphc/nepal/nepal-census-2011-vol1.pdf>